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General Comment

[Edited by Gilbert Campbell Scoggin, The University of Missouri.]

Morton William Easton, professor of English and comparative philology at the University of Pennsylvania, died on August 21. He first studied medicine at Columbia University, but later specialized in Sanskrit under Whitney, at Yale. In 1873 he went to the University of Tennessee to teach the classics, and in 1880 to the University of Pennsylvania. Here in 1886 he directed the *Acharnians*, the first Greek comedy to be presented in this country. See Hains, "The Presentation of Classical Plays," *Classical Journal*, IX, No. 5, p. 197.

William Addison Houghton, since 1907 emeritus professor of Latin at Bowdoin College, died October 23. Finishing at Andover in 1869 he passed on to Yale, being graduated there in 1873. After graduation he became principal of the preparatory department at Olivet College, in Michigan, and in 1875 he returned to Yale as tutor in Latin. In 1877 he went to the Imperial University at Tokyo, Japan, as professor of English literature, and there he remained five years. Then after a year's study in Berlin he returned to this country and taught English and also Latin at New York University. In 1892 he was appointed Winkley professor of the Latin language and literature at Bowdoin College. He was well known for his labors in connection with the American School of Classical Studies at Rome.

The second portion of the library of Frank B. Sanborn was dispersed at auction by Libbie, of Boston, November 14-15, 1917. This library was rich in association volumes recalling the anti-slavery agitation preceding Civil War days. There were many classical books bearing the signatures of Theodore Parker, Thomas Wentworth Higginson, and Sanborn, who were intimate friends of John Brown and active helpers in many of his schemes. The classical books give interesting evidence of the vitality of classical studies of the period and are not confined to classical authors. Thus, to take an example at random, there was a copy of Faber's *Thesaurus eruditionis scholasticae*, "F. B. Sanborn, Ex Dono Theo. Parkeri, 1859." Following the Harpers Ferry incident, John Brown was hanged on December 2, 1859, and Sanborn decided that now he might wisely take unto himself the advice that Socrates had once proffered to a friend: σοὶ δέ, ὦ Κοιτόβουλε, συμβουλευώ ἀπειναντίσαι (cf. Xenophon *Memorabilia* i. 3. 96). Sanborn took the next "underground" train for Canada, and

one of his early acts on arriving there was to purchase a book, a classical book, none other than Lucan's *Pharsalia*. This small volume, which, by the irony of fate, now reposes on the shelves of a man of rebel extraction, contains the following note by Sanborn: "Jan'y 31, 1860, Bought and read in Montreal during a residence there to avoid arrest." "Bought and *read*," note you. That the *second* part of this statement is true even the most unregenerate rebel would be forced to admit, because of the markings and jottings from one end to the other.

For some time there has been a movement on foot for gathering together books to be turned over eventually to the University of Louvain, to replace in some slight degree the irreparable loss suffered by that ancient university. As a contribution to this worthy cause there has recently been purchased by subscriptions in Britain the admirable collection of the late Professor H. M. Gwatkin, Dixie professor of ecclesiastical history and fellow of Emmanuel College, Cambridge. These books passed into the hands of the well-known Cambridge dealers, W. Heffer and Sons, and they decided first to offer for a limited period certain portions *en bloc* in order thereby to preserve intact certain collections amassed in the course of a lifetime by a specialist. The fields of church history and mediaeval history were particularly well covered, and it is peculiarly fitting that such a collection should pass to Louvain, about which there cluster so many memories of mediaeval times. Then, too, one thinks of the early days of the Reformation and of the gentle scholar Erasmus, whose quiet but all-pervading influence had prepared men's minds for the coming change. "Erasmus laid the egg," said the wits of the day, "but Luther hatched it"; and in vain did the cautious scholar insist that his egg had been merely a hen's egg and that the fowl of Luther's hatching was of a different kind. The name of Erasmus is intimately associated with that of Louvain, where he was often engaged in his studies, and it was at Cambridge that he finished the collation of the New Testament which was later to be issued from the press of Froben, at Basel. In Queen's College, Cambridge, there is preserved to this day, I believe, the great scholar's corkscrew, but I have never found any notice as to what hurried egress should have resulted in the leaving behind of such a necessary scholastic appurtenance. Here I am reminded of an amusing passage in one of Roger Ascham's letters of somewhat later date wherein he describes a visit to Louvain and its university:

I went to P. Nannius's chamber, to have talked with him; but he was either drunken at home, or drinking abroad; for he was making merry, and would not be seen, as an English boy, his pupil, told me. He reads Tully's *Orations* at nine of the clock: at one of the clock, Theodoricus Laudius read (whom I heard) *Oed. Tyr. Sophocl. Graece*. He read that chiding place betwixt Oedipus and Creon beginning at οὐκ οἶδ'· ἐφ' οἷς γὰρ μὴ φρονῶ σιγᾶν φιλῶ, reading twenty-one verses. His hearers, being about eighty, did knock him out with such a noise as I have not heard. This college is called *Trilingue et Buslidianum*, where he read. If Louvain, as far as I could mark,

were compared with Cambridge, Trilingue with St. John's or Trinity, Theod. Laudius with Mr. Car, ours do far excell. The reader, in α, followed our pronunciation [Ed. Giles, I, 248].

Compare also a letter to Sir John Cheke: "Lovanii fuimus, sed non diutius quam prandii apparatus postulabat: audiui tamen integram horam in trilingui collegio insignem ut illi putant virum Theodoricum Laudium profitentem *Tyrannum* Sophoclis; sequutus est in omni nostram pronuntiationem. Si hic cum Carro nostro, aut Lovinium cum Cantabrigia, conferretur, plane friget" (Giles, I, 217). This same letter contains entertaining remarks on German professors and libraries. In conclusion, we may note that the Gwatkin collection had been procured for the University of Michigan, but the American university most generously withdrew its previous order in favor of the proposed gift to Louvain.

Under normal conditions the recent quadricentennial of the posting of Luther's *Theses* on the church door at Wittenberg would have been more widely heralded in the public press. But within the countries now at war with Germany Luther was inevitably brought under the odium of Teutonic nationality, and under these circumstances there has been a strong tendency to bring into relief the least commendable traits of his character. There has been some scattered discussion as to the possible relation of the present German theory of the state with the teaching of Luther, and, as would be expected in times of intense feeling, extreme views have been upheld. Champions, to be sure, have not been lacking, who have striven to show that not Luther but Machiavelli has been the source from which German political thought has derived its inspiration. Thus the Dean of the Yale Divinity School is quoted as maintaining that "the very spirit of autocracy which Luther fought with all his might is now in the saddle in Germany and is riding that country for a terrible fall." Others, however, exultantly find a parallel (connected, shall we say, in defiance of the mathematical definition?) between the ruthlessness displayed by Luther during the Peasants' War and that practiced by his countrymen of the present day. A more pertinent question for the classical student is Luther's attitude toward humanism. On entering the University of Erfurt in preparation for his proposed course in law he studied the scholastic philosophy; but as a student he seems to have displayed little interest in the new humanities that were still very slowly forcing their way into the universities of the north. Latin, of course, was the universal language of the student, but the universities for the most part were dominated by narrow theologians who often scorned the thought of following the strict rules of grammar. There were doctors at Paris who maintained that *ego amat* was just as correct as *ego amo*. But many young men of spirit were fired with zeal for the New Learning, among whom certainly the most picturesque was that knight-errant, Ulrich von Hutten. Many students on their return home from the Italian universities were deter-

mined to spread abroad the new ideas, but the lot of these pioneers was a difficult one. In some cases these men were attached to the German universities, but they were hampered on every side. "The biography of the first scholars who attempted, by public instruction, to disseminate a taste for classical literature in the great schools of Germany, exhibits little else than a melancholy series of wanderings and persecutions—abandoning one university only, in general, to be ejected from another" (Sir William Hamilton, *Edinburgh Review* [1841], p. 182). Even after allowing for the exaggeration of satire, we may conclude that the German degree was lightly regarded in Italy. "Ego audiui ab amico meo quod quando stetit Bononiae, tunc vidit quod omnes magistri artium ex Alimania deponerentur tanquam beani, et simplicia supposita non: Quia in Italia habetur pro vituperio quando aliquis est promotus in Alimania in magistrum vel bacularium. . . . Ergo vellem quod omnes universitates facerent in simul et concluderent omnes poetas et humanistas, quia destruunt universitates" (*Epistolae obscurorum virorum* ii. 59). On another occasion an old-timer recalls the good old days when students paced the streets bearing under arm *Petrus Hispanus*, or the *Parva logicalia*, or, if they were grammarians, Alexander's *Doctrinale*, the *Vade mecum*, the *Exercitium puerorum*, or Sinthen's *Dicta*. But now instead they attend lectures on Virgil and Pliny and other "new authors" (cf. *EOV* ii. 46). A new spirit of inquiry was in the air, and a tendency to question authority was characteristic of the humanists. It was amid such surroundings that Luther suddenly gave up his preparation for the law and became a monk. The cause of this extraordinary step is difficult of explanation. That a recalcitrant "poet" should go over to the enemy seems incredible unless one is prepared to believe that he set out with the fixed purpose to beard the lion in his own den. The protagonist of humanism in the north at this time was of course Erasmus, and in any attempt to estimate the attitude and attainments of his contemporaries there is an overpowering impulse to use him as the criterion. In his eyes the touchstone of the love of letters was devotion to Greek, and in this field Luther's knowledge was very limited. But suddenly Luther stood forth as the incarnation of the skeptical spirit of the age and there flocked to his side a determined band of iconoclastic devotees. Clerical abuses had been boldly assailed by Erasmus in his books, and it is by no means improbable that from him Luther first took his cue. Be that as it may, Luther evidently expected Erasmus now to enter the arena and to take part in the rough-and-tumble fray; but nothing was farther removed from the intention of the retired scholar than the thought of such a thing. He was by nature a man of peace, and he thought that reform should come through the proper authoritative channels. He approved Luther's views about the need of reform, but he abhorred mob violence even though the law might work slowly and imperfectly. He was quite justified in his fear that the monks might confound Luther's violence with the cause of letters so dear to his own heart. In vain did he strive to force a recognition of

distinction, and the two reformers themselves became more and more estranged. It is the old story of apparent contrast between the man of thought and the man of action who in fact are supplementary to each other. Again and again the cry goes up from Erasmus that Luther is unintentionally playing into the hands of the opposition who would destroy letters. This leads Erasmus perhaps to undervalue Luther's literary attainments, and in a famous letter (*Le Clerc* ccclxxvii) he maintains that the outcry against Luther had been raised "because they believe him to be learned in our sense of the word, though in reality he is so only to a small degree." This same fear for the fortune of literature led him to shun intimacy with Reuchlin, about whose scholarship there could be no question, who was hated merely "because he knows the languages." "To know Greek is heresy," "To speak with a good accent is heresy," exclaims the cultivated scholar in his own defense. The worst epithets that the monks could apply to him were "poet" and "orator." The upshot of the matter would seem to be that undoubtedly the *fons et origo* of Luther's actions should be recognized in the doctrines of the new humanism which, however contrary to the spirit of humanism, he would thrust violently upon the world. Having once made up his mind as to what he conceived to be right in matters of belief, he resorted to the then existing unhumanistic method of forcing his opinions upon all alike. De Laur is quite right in pointing out that Luther was revolutionary and sectarian, while Erasmus was philosophic and liberal (*Érasme* ii. 430 ff.). I think that we may justly conclude that Erasmus more nearly represents the humanistic ideal, which is far from denying, however, that Luther, the man of action, accepting many of its essential features but insisting on immediate results, has brought us perceptibly nearer to the coveted goal.